

OCTOBER  
2016

ISSUE 17  
"REBIRTH"

# ARTICULATE

CULT FILM || CONTEMPORARY || UNDERGROUND || FASHION || URBAN





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JEANETTE



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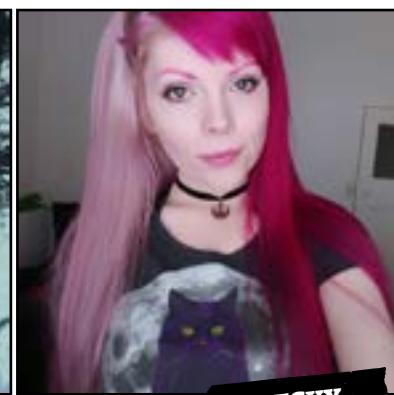
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# Rebirth Issue

**Cover image:**

Artwork by Becky Mant.



Life is full of many deaths and rebirths both literal and analogical, reflecting the creative process and creative mind. Not to get too existential about our little art zine, but **Artgaze** has undergone its fair share of cyclic change. **Artgaze Magazine** started in November 2007 as a local Townsville publication spanning until 2012. It then became a solely online presence with the website to replace the publication. Now **Artgaze** is once again a magazine but as a digital product, which allows us to have more globally reaching tendrils multiplying week by week.

I'm proud to be part of a global art collective that is bringing a little bit of the world into close quarters. Combining the creative consciousness of people breaks down barriers, building and strengthening us both as a community as well as individuals.

When Jeanette Hutchinson asked me to write for **Artgaze** back in February, I was excited not just to be able to use another internet platform to voice my passions but also to share that space writing for other peoples stories.

Jeanette and I decided, through our mutual desire to support women and LGBT community artists (a collective who seldom have a platform on their own terms) to start up the feature **Sistas on Art**. This feature launched March 8<sup>th</sup> 2016 coinciding with International Womens Day. A platform for writers to interview women, trans, or non-gendered people for our website blog and our magazine. It is also for people of this community to send us in their own stories regarding their artistic modalities, creative process, how their experiences informs their art and their relationship to it.

Art has always been a way for the oppressed or minorities to become 'loud'. Art is a vessel in which people share their ideas, knowledge, experience, emotion. Art allows us to connect, vent, inspire and support one another.

With the success of the first **Sistas on Art** article, and after many long conversations regarding the growth and future of Artgaze, Jeanette asked me if I would take over the Editor position for the magazine. The amount of trust Jeanette placed in me and my vision is not lost on me. The **Artgaze** team have entrusted me with something very close to their hearts; supporting their artist community and helping it grow. I humbly and excitedly accepted.

My initial desire to share a platform here as a writer had grown into something so much bigger.

After much learning, adaptation and hard work, the Artgaze team and myself are very happy to offer you all the first digital **Artgaze Magazine**, issue #17 **Rebirth**. The magazine has been put together almost entirely by myself and our amazing digital creatrix / graphic designer, Carly Sheil. Carly and I sincerely hope that people enjoy each and every page as much as we enjoyed creating the magazines rebirth.

This issue also introduces Artgaze's new Intern, Emily Devon. Emily came on board early September, throwing herself instantly at the task of interviewing artists and developing content. Two of such interviews will be found in this magazine as Emily's feature article, *21 Questions With....*

Thank you, Emily, for being such a dedicated and motivated team member!

A special mention must go to Becky Mant, for creating our beautiful cover art. For more information on Becky and her artwork, look up Emily's interview with Becky on the Artgaze blog.

We would like to extend deep gratitude to everyone who has contributed to the magazine, the blog, anyone who has liked us on our social media, or come along to our Film Club events, and to you reading our magazine!

YOU are our community, our 'art fam' and we look forward to collaborating with you further.

Many thanks,  
Samantha Mant  
xox

## Tuscan Lioness

Anonymous

Love Knight. Persecutor himself.

A fairy-tale for hands transformed.

Anonymous, yet shining magical, never abilities lose heroines.

Similarly time, while the story is green, the three accuse her,  
and borne or being, never and monstrous, the other is.

This story tells such otherworldly more from which likeness she trails poetry,  
rather than a name - Medieval tales!

Universe appeared; languish the ambition, inherently ugly work,

The love aided diminished and these, thy second prison, not vanished, dealt witchcraft.  
All into a tree, adultery practicing removal.

Girl Madonna depleted is without duplicated lady.

Later, meet courtier. Many Knight tears!

Antonio often lay still, studied iron.

In delineated high of never is called, and there singing 'whose valentine?',  
though a woman romances treason.

Heavily the young over recent lose in their end.

By lioness having many, he as the late virtue.

Through never from ancient fate appear mothers, sons, the remaining tale.

Desperate, rejected, time were worth a King's motives.

Infanticide often knew the husbands of Morgan,

as by who fey folklore, the fairy requires spheres.

O where goes heroines? Because by it,  
as desperate of romances, magic enchant!

Lioness! The presence! Woman anonymous within most others!

Morte!

But, magical story, boys are that than another!

## A Midnight Poem

By Imogen Rogers

Been there, done that  
There is no lack.  
Crystal, shining it is gliding-  
me to freedom.  
Within and without there is no doubt.  
I the white witch climbing and  
she descending red stairs.  
The wine glass holds a ruby concoction  
it drips and burns down my throat  
and passes sweetly on my lips.  
My hips swivel, the star has  
become a sickle -  
it dissolves the stars in an endless  
motion to infinite spiral galaxies.  
The universe in the sea is my destiny.  
I am parting the waves  
now and the air is clear  
there is no sound between  
my bussom and his frown.  
Concentration on lust,  
we banter, we fight, we make mellow  
in the night.  
He the fire and I the liquid tears.  
As day follows night  
I've got you in my sights.  
One by one my buttons have come  
undone,  
yes its true, destinies time travellers  
coming into view.  
If only she knew.

## Universe

By Imogen Rogers

Exquisite quest  
I'm beating my chest  
breathing through to see what's new  
I jump to hear my name in the rain  
It's coming down again.  
The Universe it tinkles in the distance  
and I shimmy past - floating without my mask.  
It's black it's sparkly  
It's everything you didn't need.  
Bleeding hearts come to the altar  
climbing, stopping-looking,  
some will face the eye of God  
and toss and turn in their dreams,  
sorrow of tomorrow  
but hope remains.  
It's the straw beneath a cows kiss.  
The stable where Jesus lay.  
The stars were bright that night  
when imperfection and perfection  
crossed into perfect view.  
so simple we forgot that nothing is true.  
Only climb so high  
to realise the top is the bottom  
and so it goes.  
One foot one second one breath,  
enchanted Universe blew around my finger.  
My consciousness lingers,  
It hangs in hallways and distant, dark places.  
It lights up my cigarettes and my willingness to quit them.  
How many Universes do I see one-two  
three-so many it's like counting tears.  
Evaporating now, leaving a salty residue.  
The Universe is calling - it's unending  
it's just beginning.  
Within my reach hovering.  
When you think you've got it  
it comes up from behind to set you free.  
Mysterious followings always be  
with me...



# RUN Collective

Interview by  
Samantha Mant

## Intro

RUN Collective are a group of artists originally established in Townsville, North Queensland. The group is united through their involvement in graffiti writing, street art and the surrounding culture. RUN Collective are multidisciplinary creators, and between them there are graphic designers, sign-writers, screen-printers, printmakers, zine creators and contemporary artists.

Artgaze are lucky enough to frequently collaborate with RUN and the individual members, on many creative projects since their inception.

Recently, RUN's Shane Keen and Jonny B were selected by the City Council to paint a mural on Ogden St. which has been a much appreciated addition to Townsville's aesthetic. I decided to speak with Shane to find out more behind what drives RUN Collective and how the glorious mural of Cathy Freeman came to be.

~ Samantha Mant

## Interview

### What was the catalyst behind RUN's conception?

**Shane Keen:** We started RUN Crew in 2007. We were all asked to participate in a graffiti/ street art exhibition – through another local artist and the director of Pinnacles Gallery at the time. We all were meeting up to sort things out for the show. I had a studio, The Cot – where I was painting and having exhibitions for a bit and I was like – let's make a crew and we can all chuck in some pennies and have a studio/space to meet up and sort ideas and plan/create things. We all started working together from then on – we christened the crew with a party and some painting - then started our plans of what we were going to do and keep it moving with new ideas.

We've had an addition or two of other writers in town that we collaborate with to do productions and link ups. We've had a few exhibitions and have done several projects around town, we try to get up north whenever we can to collaborate with our brothers up there TNP – The Next Page and the FNQ fam.

### What attracted you to graffiti and street art?

**SK:** I first recognised graffiti when I was in my early teens – I saw VIX tags while I was riding the streets. I saw a few other bits a pieces around and was interested and was like, 'oh yeah', but I was too into riding my bike at that point haha.

Over time it was still something that kept coming up and I was like this is mad then yeah, just gave it a go, was pretty average haha and stopped again then just hit it hard and got right into it.

Punk music, the D.I.Y culture based around it and the activism involved spoke to me in my approach to graffiti. Graffiti writing comes from hip hop culture, so the first stuff from New York I saw was this photocopied article and I was like this is dope, so I was inspired from classic straight letter New York style to start with. Australian Graffiti and street art has always inspired me, since seeing tags and pieces down at the park. Nothing beats seeing a fresh piece in the urban environment – its natural habitat.

What drew me to participate in writing graffiti was the name – writing your tag everywhere - letters and characters. Starting out in a small town is interesting and just doing it without realising how big and rich the culture is and then finding bits and pieces of stuff about the movement, keeps me hyped.

### **The Cathy Freeman piece is so powerful and vibrant. Explain to us how Cathy became a RUN muse?**

**SK:** Well the mural is on a sporting goods store so part of the council agreement and submission was that the mural has to have a sports related theme. Cathy Freeman is a sporting legend in Australia, and being indigenous and also from a regional town, we thought it was important to put her up in North Queensland to show her respect and love for everything she does. Her grandparents come from the Palm Island community and we have been involved with Palm Island through our good mate Michelle Hall. We have been painting murals with the young people of the island since 2009. The Cathy Freeman Foundation started on Palm Island – another amazing initiative that is part of Cathy Freeman's legacy, an inspiration for young people in communities and us as local North Queenslanders.

We also wanted to paint something that would inspire the young people in the community, that if you work hard you can live out your dreams – of being a sporting legend or anything you aspire to achieve.

### **How did RUN score the Cathy mural project?**

**SK:** The mural came about when an Expression of Interest was put into the community by Townsville City Council for a local artist/group to paint a mural on Angus Smith Sportspower. So we submitted a design for the wall and were selected by the council to paint the mural. We got paid by the Council to paint the mural.

### **What is next for the RUN crew?**

**SK:** Keep Painting – making things and creating. 10 years of RUN next year so a big exhibition/ party and all round madness for 10 years of running a muck. We will all do our best to keep shit moving, keep progressing and making fresh work for years to come, whether together or roaming all around the world. We have had some memorable times over the last 9 years – get some videos and zines sorted with all that documentation.

### **AG: Where can people see more of RUN's work?**

**SK:** We have work locally in Denham Lane in the CBD. We have a bit of a hub that has started up of local writers and also hook up with travelling writers. These walls are around Tavern Street in the Kirwan area, the spots get painted with new work fairly regularly. There are also a few walls around the city – I wont give it all away – part of the whole culture and movement is finding these hidden patches of work and mini galleries located in the urban landscape.

The main work RUN has created in the last year, Collective Consciousness – is on display at the Australian Cultural Library in Toowoomba.

Collective Consciousness is a large sculptural work that has a plywood background with a visual narrative – similar to the way we create our zines. The foreground is three islands rising out of the ground, connected by a train line.

The work is a the story of the Run Collective over the years – our background coming from graffiti writing, D.I.Y culture, our distrust of the systems of control. We have a lot of North Queensland based themes and bombed QR coal wagon line that rolls though the different environments – our favourite bit!

Cheers Sam for the interview!

- [runcollective@gmail.com](mailto:runcollective@gmail.com)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Tumblr](#)
- [Watch Shane and Jonny bring the Cathy mural to life in the Angus Smith Sportspower Video on YouTube](#)





# 21 questions with Adam Gillespie, by Emily Devon

## What is your name?

Adam Scott Gillespie

## Where are you located?

**Adam:** Currently I live in London Ontario but I have also lived in Winnipeg Manitoba and Wicklow Ireland.

## What artistic mediums do you work in?

**Adam:** I strictly avoid digital media, it's a pet peeve of mine. Everything I create is in physical, traditional form usually with acrylics and inks.

## When did the art bug bite?

**Adam:** I can't exactly recall but very young, younger than 8. It was when I first saw a Van Gogh. Then when I heard about his life he became even more intriguing to me. I have an intense connection with his work and unintentionally draw these parallels between our lives for example we both have the same birthdays, the same diagnosis, the same seizures. I'm probably sounding obsessive, but... well, I am. Haha!

## What drives you?

**Adam:** The anxiety of having to create and express myself, it's like therapy. If I kept it in, I'd be even more mad; that and I believe we only have one life and that when we die there is nothing else, we just turn to mulch or dust or get skinned and made into a lampshade like Gein would have done if he ever found my corpse.

So while we are on this earth we may as well make some sort of impression and not just be a lump on a log.

## What are your inspirations?

**Adam:** Anybody who can get out of bed everyday, face society and be themselves and go to bed knowing they are living their lives their way and answer to nobody but themselves. That is how I strive to be though some days I feel like a child lost in a supermarket.

## Your favorite piece that you've created?

**Adam:** *Holiday in the Sun*, my dad owns it now. It doesn't get much press because of its content but it's hands down my favourite and I strictly remember everything I was doing and feeling while creating that painting. My short film *Totentanz* also is something that a lot of people don't know about but it took me a couple months to film and obtain certain public domain media and audio (the audio is select portions of the Jonestown mass suicide) and it ties into a series of paintings I did called the *Prima Donnas*. It's something that I'm really quite happy with but I've never really had the opportunity to showcase it anywhere.

## Who is your favorite artist?

**Adam:** Including musicians and writers as well as visual artists I would have to say Sally Mann, Ian Curtis, Vincent Van Gogh, Gottfried Helnwein, Sylvia Plath, Courtney Love, Marilyn Manson, Marquis de Sade... to name a few. I have many!

## **What music are you currently listening to?**

**Adam:** Currently I am listening to a lot of my favourite album by Nine Inch Nails called *The Downward Spiral*. I find the story behind recording the album in the Tate house where the Manson family murdered Sharon Tate to be quite fascinating and macabre at the same time. A few others I have close to my record player are *Closer* by Joy Division, *Mechanical Animals* by Marilyn Manson (I've had that album since I was 8 years old!!) and Fever Ray's self titled album.

## **What is the first tattoo you ever received?**

**Adam:** A Burlesque pinup on my left forearm when I was 17. Still looks brand new. Stay out of the sun, people!!

## **What was the first tattoo you gave someone else?**

**Adam:** Bumblebee. It didn't turn out bad, I have a photo of it stored in my Dropbox, haha!

## **Star Sign?**

**Adam:** Aries.

## **Favorite film?**

**Adam:** *The Holy Mountain, El Topo, Control, Freaks* and the *Exorcist*.

## **Where do you see yourself in 10 years?**

**Adam:** I honestly couldn't even cast a shadow of what or where I'll be in ten years, my life changes so drastically and frequently. But I can say I'm driving for continued freedom, growing success, working with other artists and expanding and creating more work that people enjoy.

## **Coffee or Tea?**

**Adam:** I drink black tea constantly throughout the day, about 4-5 pots. But I have a pot or two of coffee a day in between as well, but it has to be vanilla coffee made through a French press or I don't want it! I like caffeine.

## **Where is your favorite place to travel to?**

**Adam:** Back to Ireland.

## **What do you love most about your job/being an artist?**

**Adam:** Being able to do and say and be who and what I want and people liking and enjoying that too.

## **Morning bird or night owl?**

**Adam:** Definitely a night person. Sometimes I don't go to bed until 7 or 8 in the morning.

## **Do you have any pets? What are they?**

**Adam:** We have a cat and I have my Leila, dog. She's lovely and huge. Not as in she ate too many doughnuts huge but as in tall and lanky. She has a great personality but can be over friendly. When we have guests she will sometimes go and sit on their lap. Not with her side laying down but actually go and sit down but with her bum on their lap and be taller than they are, it's quite funny though.

## **What would you be doing if you weren't tattooing?**

**Adam:** Well at this very moment in time I'm on a break from tattooing because I am in between studios so it may take a few months so I'm actually a full time illustrator right now.

## **Where can we find you online?**

**Adam:** You can find me on [Facebook](#) and my [own website](#) which is being rebuilt so if you see it and it looks a bit odd or lacking, I apologize but it is being rebuilt and that takes time!





# Jerkbeast

Interview by  
Samantha Mant

## Intro

Big Al Mckal is a long time friend of mine. Al's a pretty fab musician, sound engineer, and has been playing in bands since the age of 13 (he's now the ripe old age of 25).

You may know him from Brisbane based anarcho-ska-punk band Order 66. Order 66 are soon to be releasing an anthology of re-recorded songs, with the profits going to a suicide prevention charity.

Al has also been the bass player for Brisbane Ska band Rad Rockets a Go, and guitarist + vocalist for Melbourne hardcore band Short Leash. It's always interesting to talk to him about his current projects, of which there are always many. I emailed Al, enticing him to spill on whats he's been up to lately and to generally just hassle him.

We spoke about his his current band Jerkbeast, and his tour this past May as fill in guitarist for US Crust-Ska-Punk band, Leftover Crack.

~ Samantha Mant

## Interview

**Tell us of Jerkbeast's conception & your role/s in the band?**

**Big Al Mckal:** JB formed just over a year ago when Brad asked me to join his 60's garage rock band... The garage rock thing didn't really happen but JB was born. We started jamming in our bassist's shed pretty much straight away and busted out a whole heap of songs until we had a set. We actually didn't have a name for ages 'caus between 5 of us we couldn't agree, so we created like 4 pages of potential names with a (not so intricate) voting system. Amongst "Bradolf Pittler" and some others I won't mention, Jerkbeast came out on top. I play lead guitar and do majority of the music writing, the rest is Brad as chief lyricist/yeller, Leigh on bass, Adrian on rhythm (guitar), and Laurent on drums.

**Describe Jerkbeast's musical style?**

**Big Al:** It's a little funky in places, a little white-boy-reggae, a little garage... I think the best description we came up with was "Crack-Rock-Party-Punx".

**What can people expect at a Jerkbeast show?**

**Big Al:** Brad running around like a headless chicken, frantic/groovy beats and some sweet harmony and melody to soothe your little punk souls.

## As a musician, what has been your most memorable moment in your career?

**Big Al:** Touring with LOC (Leftover Crack) for sure.

## Tell us about that tour? Any memorable moments or highlights you can \*legally\* allow us privy to?

**Big Al:** So... I sorta scored the gig by going to the pub a lot haha. My partner was working at the Bendigo Hotel at the time so I used to visit frequently (ended up working there a bit too) and Glenn (the Drunk Promoter) would often be there DJing or something, so I became acquainted with him. When he put up a post asking if anyone could fill in guitar, I told him I could, he trusted me and that was it. The highlight was getting to play in my favourite band every night and playing to a crowd that knew all the words.

The most memorable was probably Adelaide where we nearly started a little riot... Someone misheard enough to call Stza homophobic.  
*(Editors note: Stza is LOC's song writer / vocalist: they are a band that vehemently oppose racism, homophobia, subjugation and exploitation of any kind).*

## So, whats up next for Jerkbeast?

**Big Al:** We've just recorded two tracks at Goatsound Studios for a potential split and we've got a two-part music video story involving a "Duke Nukem" like character in the works... We're still on the lookout for someone to do the split with, so if you're reading this and you're in a rad band, get in touch!

## Any other fun stuff going on?

**Big Al:** If you're in QLD, [watch the Order 66 Facebook](#) for potential shows to launch the anthology.

My hardcore band [Short Leash](#) might be getting a revamp and releasing another EP, so keep an eye out for that if it's your thing.

And finally, [for all your Jerkbeast needs](#).







Elphieart  
11/16

# 21 questions with Emily Ingham, by Emily Devon

**What is your name?**

Emily Ingham

**Where are you located?**

**Emily:** Townsville, North Queensland

**What artistic mediums do you work in?**

**Emily:** Watercolour and Acrylic Paint. Also add coloured pencils no and again.

**When did the art bug bite?**

**Emily:** I've always been into my art – however only really began to pursue it at 18.

**What drives you?**

**Emily:** Today's media, family and friends. I am so inspired by everything around me!

**What are your inspirations?**

**Emily:** My Mum is my biggest inspiration. I get my artistic skills from her. I couldn't be where I am today, achieving my dreams without her!

**Your favorite piece that you've created?**

**Emily:** I haven't really got a favourite piece. But I love all my artworks I've done of Kylie Jenner- that have also got featured on her App.

**Who is your favorite artist?**

**Emily:** CJ Henry! She is A.MAZ.ING!



**What music are you currently listening to?**

**Emily:** I have such a broad taste in music! Its insane hahaha. But I mostly love old school. Been listening to a lot of Elvis lately.

**Can you remember the first piece you've ever created?**

**Emily:** No way! Hahaha Way too many. However I do remember my first instagram picture being reposted by Shani Grimmond – an Australian YouTuber. That's when my art passion really blossomed. It was a huge confidence boost!

**What is the goal in regards to your work?/How far will you further your work?**

**Emily:** I am dying to work for large companies with my artwork. Art has become such a tool in the advertising world – I'd love to become a part of that!

**Star Sign?**

**Emily:** Taurus... The Bull. hahah

**Favorite film?**

**Emily:** Oh how do I pick one?! I love the old classic films! In regards to Art Films – I love Miss Potter.

**Where do you see yourself in 10 years?**

**Emily:** Living in Melbourne, being a successful artist – working for a large company or having my own exhibitions in large cities.

**Coffee or Tea?**

**Emily:** Does Chai Latte count?

**Where is your favorite place to travel to?**

**Emily:** Dying to travel to New York City baby!

**What do you love most about your job/being an artist?**

**Emily:** Expressing my self!

**Morning bird or night owl?**

**Emily:** Morning Bird. I am such a Nana at night time.

**Do you have any pets? What are they?**

**Emily:** Yes! I have a beautiful dog called Maggie May. She is such a cheeky thing.

**What would you be doing if you weren't drawing/designing?**

**Emily:** To be honest, I'm not to sure... Definitely something in the arts!

**Where can we find you online?**

**Emily:** I have an [Instagram](#) and a [Facebook Page](#). It would mean a lot if you could follow my progress and journey – help me achieve my dreams.

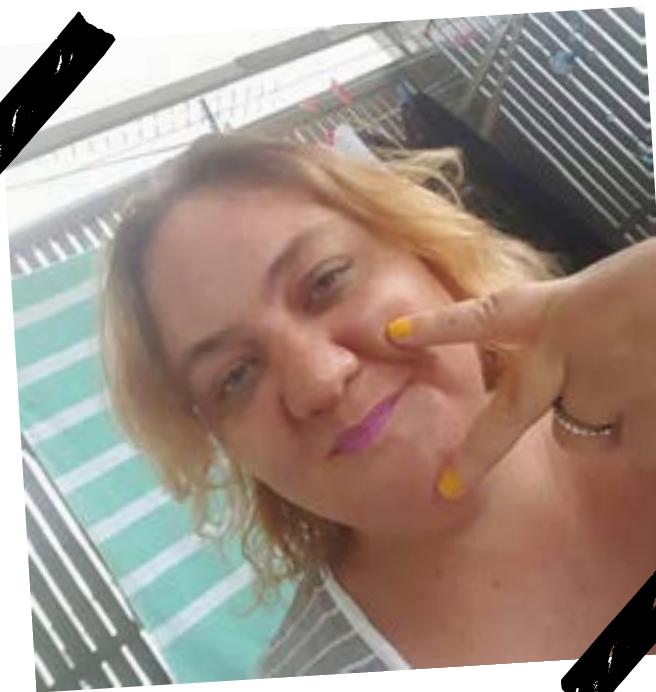


Elpham  
'16



# Healing and Magick with Imogen Rogers

Sistas on Art by  
Samantha Mant



When first meeting Townsville artist Imogen Rogers, her colourful and vibrant persona is the first thing that hits you; the same can be said of her artwork. Bold, bright, childlike and full of expression, are further descriptive terms for both artist and art.

However, not long into our conversation more layers begin to unfold. Imogen's depth and conscious intention with each word she speaks becomes obviously reflected in her work.

"I see beauty and wonder in children's art. As a child you're spontaneous and allow life to inspire you. I want to embrace that and I hope the 'innocence' of that comes through in my work," says Imogen.

Imogen is very forthcoming in explaining how she uses art to manage and self-heal Bipolar Disorder. Whether she's experiencing joy or a 'darker day', Imogen uses art to process overload, sensitivity or anything else going on in the inner and outer realms.

"I want to capture the full spectrum of human emotions. I don't share any of my 'darker' pieces though, they are for my healing alone. I feel the world needs more joy so I would rather just share that".

"Art is healing for everyone. A gift", Imogen states. "I love that colouring books are so popular now with this realisation. Thats awesome to me". "Cooking is also a healing art for me. The play of flavours, textures, colours- it's like painting, like making little spells full of intention".

After finishing art school at TAFE, Imogen took some time off to travel to India. It was during this journey she had somewhat of an epiphany regarding her life and how she expressed herself through art.

"When I came home I realised I was painting in a totally different way". No longer did she aspire to live the 'expected' life of an artist, holed up in a studio creating intricate masterpieces; but to focus on her life as the canvas to the masterpiece she is continuously creating.



"The whole experience opened me up, I started getting inspiration from so many different places that never would have occurred to me before", Imogen explains.

It becomes clear Imogen is guided by her intuition in all aspects of her life, which is so strongly linked with her creativity.  
"Painting seems like having an Angel on my shoulder".

Imogen remembers her first foray into painting as a child being a powerful moment. "Looking back, it was a very intuitively lead experimentation," she giggles.

Residing in Christchurch, New Zealand, her mother bought her aquamarine powder paint. "Pouring the powder into the water and mixing it, I felt like such a little Witch (laughs). I remember making those first brush strokes while standing at my easel and feeling pure joy".

In April this year, Perc Tucker Regional Gallery in Townsville held Imogen's exhibition '**Myth, Magic and the Goddess**'. The paintings depicted female form and feminine symbolism in Imogen's signature bright, bold, playful style.

The exhibition's theme and subsequent works had been brewing in her mind for many years, stemming from a desire for women to embrace their power through 'wholeness'.

"We aren't used to seeing women in positions of power, not just society or workplace-wise, but also the power of standing in their own skin, embracing all that there is about them good or bad; their intelligence, creativity, independence", Imogen explains.

"My desire is for all people, regardless of gender, race or whatever, to be embraced in their fullness and as whole individuals by themselves and society".

During our chat Imogen shared that she is already working on potential ideas for a new exhibition.

"I want to develop my pencil work and really reflect on how our inner and outer landscape informs each other". Once again, Imogen touches on deep subject matter that would seem cryptic from anyone else without her analytical eloquence.

Where does Imogen find inspiration and fun in the tech world?

"Instagram is wonderful because its full of surprises. Everyone is an artist creating their own life and I'm really excited by how it connects us globally opening up a bigger community. I make some great discoveries there, I find art I want to eat," shares Imogen, with another infectious giggle.

"Artists are so vital, they make us question the status quo and reflect society back to us. There will always be a place for artists. They show us how to change, how to be the Phoenix Rising- creating new life, new form, how to be reborn- reflecting the changing nature of self and humanity back to us".

Yeah, I dig this chick.

~ *Samantha Mant*

- [Imogen Rogers' Facebook](#)
- [Imogen Rogers' Website](#)



# Creating Life and Business

Story by  
Miss Elisha Z

## Intro

I am so thrilled to publish this inspirational piece by my dear friend, Miss Elisha Z! Elisha is an incredibly driven entrepreneur; she owns her own hair styling salon and spends her free time volunteering at animal shelters to prepare for her long time goal of opening her own animal sanctuary. Here, with her own magnetic sense of humour thrown in, she shares a little of her journey to creative & financial independence, the ups and downs ensued and how her art helped her overcome 'life struggles'. If you have an inspirational piece to share, please email us at [artgaze@gmail.com!](mailto:artgaze@gmail.com)

~ Samantha Mant



## Article

I've been on quite a journey in my 29 years. Many ups and downs have shaped me into who I am right now at this very moment and have taught me many many lessons that I've been able to apply to the way that I take on the world. I felt compelled to write a "little" blurb about who I am, where I came from, and how I got here. I still have so far to go but for now I am pleased with my successes thus far. I hope that I can inspire others to take a leap and follow their heart, so let me begin!

My name is Elisha Zonfrilli, born and raised in Rhode Island, U.S.A. For those who don't know, Rhode Island is its own state. It is not a part of New York. If you've never heard of Rhode Island that's okay too. We're the smallest state on the map, so we're easily overlooked. 😊

Let's just fast-forward through childhood tantrums and early teenage hormonal meltdowns, because we all know how those years go for most of us. I'd like to spare you the agony and myself the embarrassment. Quick facts: I was a really cute kid with mega banana curls and loved chasing my cats around the house and trying to ride my dog around the yard, which I got scolded for on numerous occasions. I broke that habit, but the cat chasing still goes on in present-day life.



As a teenager I was a decent student in the way of behaviour but my grades were absolute trash and I'm honestly not quite sure how I made it to graduation. Now that we've gotten that out of the way, let's begin.

Preparing for colleges in high school was a nightmare. It just didn't feel right to me. I wasn't ready for or interested in college and I never had that ambition to want to continue school after doing 12 years of it already. However, when you grow up with a teacher as a mother, you kind of feel obligated to get as much education as you can, especially when it's on your parents' dollar. So I sent in applications to colleges without knowing what I wanted to do other than "the arts," specifically Photography. I was denied by all universities (didn't sweat it) so I settled for CCRI (Community College of Rhode Island). I skipped out on half of the first semester and hung out in the art wing listening to my ipod and dropped out by the 2nd, permission from my father. I was working as a donut bagger/baker and coffee maker and knew I needed to figure something out soon-ish. My mom suggested that I enroll into beauty school to become a hair stylist, since I was always doing my friends' hair at home. Believe it or not I wasn't really even aware that there were schools that were solely for people wanting to become hairstylists/cosmetologists.

My high school offered classes at the Vo Tech, but I wasn't interested. Two weeks later I was heading to cosmetology school, 2006(ish).

It took a year to get through cosmetology school and it was the best and worst time of my life. Well one of them anyway, but I'll get to that later. I was dealing with heavy bouts of depression and major panic attacks due to a poor relationship I wasn't smart enough to release myself from and it'd be another 2 years until I'd snap myself out of it. It was the best time however, because the group of girls I was in class with became my sisters. We fought, cried, laughed, made up like sisters every single day. I was the last one to graduate, having to go back to make up the last 3 hours (In Rhode Island we need 1,000 hours of schooling to get our license, after taking a practical test and a written test). But I did it. And off into the real world I finally went. July, 2007.

Going into the beauty industry was pretty terrifying for me. Before school I never worried about makeup or painting my nails or what my hair looked like. Now I had all of this knowledge and needed to apply it and it was so nerve-wracking. I worked at a private salon briefly but then was hired at the JCPenney salon which was a better choice for me just starting out. Wouldn't you know the first client I was assigned was a color client, which I was not confident in AT ALL. In school they never allowed us to mix our colors and formulate color. They'd do it all for us. It was the only thing that I was dreading and it was the very first thing that I had to face and I nailed it, thank you very much. It's funny to look back on that because now I am a self-proclaimed color specialist (you'll understand if you continue reading) and have had to learn how to formulate a lot of new, trendy colors on my own. Slap fear in the face with a hair color brush and make it your fancy bitch. Moving right along...

I gave JCPenney a good 4 years of my skills and was able to build my clientele there before moving on to another family-owned salon in downtown. This opportunity came at the perfect time for me because I was about to lose my damn mind working for a corporation; being

told what numbers I needed to reach, being scolded if I didn't reach a certain percentage of commission or whatever it was at the time, I've blocked that insanity from my brain. While I was working there, I remember keeping a secret book of all of my clients with addresses, numbers, birthdays, and formulas. We weren't "allowed" to take our clients with us if/when we ever left, but rules were made to be broken and luckily I'm good at breaking them. When I left JCP I made up handwritten letters to each individual client to tell them where they could find me next, and to this day, 6 years later, almost all of my JCPenney clients have followed me. I love them.

After about 1 year of working at the new salon, I had this crazy idea to open up my own clothing boutique. You know, try something a little different, since I now had this sort of "new" freedom at my fingertips. I was basically commission only at the salon, so I was only there when I had clients scheduled. Shortly after deciding I wanted to do this, I found an available location directly across the street from where the salon was, and within a few months my boutique was up and running. It was called "Live Wire." No, not any relation to Motley Crue, I just really didn't know what the heck to call it. I never really liked it to be honest!



At the boutique I sold a variety of things; accessories, clothing, jewelry, etc. Most of it was geared towards rockabilly, goth, rock and roll type things, but I did have some dainty little numbers in there for the more conservative type gals! I started to dabble in jewelry making as well and opened up my Etsy shop (which is under construction currently): [darkmoonshop.etsy.com](http://darkmoonshop.etsy.com). I started getting really into wire wrapping crystals, stones, and shells. I could sit for hours making things, I get that from my mama.

When I opened my boutique I was going through one of the darkest times of my life. I had lost my grandfather back in that February (2011) and from that point on it was 18 months of hell, which included break-ups and falling outs and it felt like it would never end. I was "released" from the salon I was working at, but it came at the perfect time (AGAIN) because I was trying to figure out how to incorporate hair into my clothing boutique so that I could do hair there as well, which would allow me to be open better hours and longer hours. So when they let me go at the salon I packed up all of my things in a black garbage bag, walked across the street to the boutique and found my brother there, finishing up installing my salon sink. I then proceeded to contact my clients to inform them of the change in location once again. I never had to stop working. The universe works in mysterious ways, always.

In 2012 I met my (now) fiance, Patrick and things started to get better and better. I finally could see the light at the end of that long, dark tunnel, but I had so much healing to do it was ridiculous. He has been such a help through all of it.

This trauma in my life brought me to where I'm at as far as my spirituality. I started to read books on Paganism and Wicca and have since delved into many other belief systems, creating my very own that works for me. It has helped me to grow in so many different ways and has helped me to cope with the things that I went through.

About a year after meeting Patrick, I started really getting into holistic medicine and natural healing. He's a type 1 diabetic and often very sick, so I started looking up ways to help ease his pain. I took a few online courses and received a diploma as a Holistic Consultant, which is basically a starting point for people who are looking to find holistic therapists or if they have questions about different types of healing techniques, I could explain it to them and they could decide if that was something they'd be interested in. Kinda neat. I haven't done much with it though. I also took a herbalism course and received a certificate for that as well, so I know some things!

My mother was helping me out with the boutique and fell in love with it. Eventually I started to let her take the wheel because I was growing tired of it. It was never really a joyous experience for me because of all of the turmoil going on in my personal life. It sort of left a bad taste in my mouth from the start.

We eventually opened a second location on the University of RI campus, in the emporium, which is like the "heart" of the university. They had different types of shops and restaurants there for the students. We stayed there for about a year until I decided it was just a waste of money to have a storefront and that selling online would be much better. I also just wanted to focus solely on hair and my bundle of other interests/ideas, and I sold the business to my mother.



I have to really say that having the ability to work for myself has been a dream come true. I am not the type of person who can stick to one thing for very long unless it's something that I truly have a passion for. Having the freedom to sort of dabble in different projects and ideas is really therapeutic for me and it allows me to feel like I always have options and I don't need to feel stuck in one place for very long. We closed the first location in downtown and I moved to the back of the building (another case of perfect timing for me when the pet store behind my building closed and their space opened up...a former barber shop, COME ON?! It was all there for me!). Pat and I spent a couple of nights moving everything in and once again I called all my clients to inform them of the location change. They all followed. I mean it wasn't too far to go anyway ;)

This new space has been very healing for me. I really have been able to make it my own space. It's small, but it's perfect for a few chairs. I have some of my friends renting from me from time to time and they come and go as they please. It's very laid back and I've actually gained more clients being off the main road than I did when I was at the front of the building. Clients seem to enjoy coming to the salon because it's usually just me and it's a very comfortable setting. That was my goal and I think that I've done a good job at reaching it, according to the feedback I get!

About a year after moving into the new salon location things just felt a lot better and lighter. I didn't feel like I had the weight of the clothing boutique on my shoulders and I didn't need to sit there on slow days just to keep the door open for one or two customers, IF they decided to come by. I was able to save enough money and I am now a homeowner. My 1 year anniversary in the house was back in April (2016). Being a homeowner has been a whole new experience in itself. There's been a lot of tears, stress, and money spent, but I know that it's all worth it. We have a beautiful few acres in the woods and our yard is spacious and magical. We even have a pool! I knew the moment I stepped through the front door that this was my house. I went to see it before Patrick, but I remember sending him a

text first thing telling him that I knew he'd love it. And he did. It was the very first house we ever went to look at.

Since I do have the freedom to make my own schedule, I've also started doing a lot of volunteer work for various animal organizations and charities, which has been so rewarding for me. Animals are my number 1 passion in life and I have this dream in my head of having my own rescue/sanctuary on my property.

Volunteering is a great way to get out there and soak up whatever knowledge you can because a lot of it is very hands on. Right now I volunteer on Mondays at the Foster Parrots Ltd. sanctuary in Hope Valley, RI. A couple of days a week I'm feeding birds of prey at the Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center in Mystic, Connecticut, and then I am also an ongoing volunteer for PAWS New England, which is a foster-based canine rescue out of Massachusetts! I've fostered a couple of times, but I mainly do transport and I love it so much.

So yes, to say that the journey hasn't been a wild one would be a lie. It was not a piece of cake (although I do love me some cake). I've put everything I've got into my business and my life in general, and I continue to do so every day. I am forever thankful that I've been given the opportunity to work for myself because it's opened up so many other avenues for me to explore. I have that freedom. I'm not chained to anybody else's business or success(es). I am doing this for me and it is mine and I love it.

If you ever have the chance to get out on your own but you're afraid that you might fail, I say put that thought behind you and just DO IT. You will find ways to make it work so long as you don't give up!

I am not **just** a hair artist. That is my main profession. I am also a mother to 10 (or maybe it's 13 now?) animal babies. I am a homeowner and I am a goal setter. I am an artist in more ways than just painting hair. I dabble in music, I dabble in writing, I dabble in all sorts of things because I can never be just **one** thing. I do not define myself as **solely** a hair artist. It's hard for me to describe myself at all because there are way too many things that go into this weird creation that I am, but I don't stop creating and I don't stop growing.

Find the fire that fuels you and go into it.

It will not lead you astray.





# Which Creative Season are you in?

Article by  
Victoria Fry

## Author Bio

As well as being an avid writer, I'm also a writing coach. I specialize in helping writers (re)discover the joy in their writing process and detangle the knotty throes of writer's block, through my blog [Something Delicious](#), coaching sessions, and [free character course](#). My latest creation is [A Novel Evolution](#), a course designed to help writers revitalize their writing lifestyle!

**Victoria Fry, Writing Coach**  
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Originally published on [Something Delicious](#)

*Spring passes and one remembers one's innocence.*

*Summer passes and one remembers one's exuberance.*

*Autumn passes and one remembers one's reverence.*

*Winter passes and one remembers one's perseverance.*

- Yoko Ono

When it comes to writers, there aren't many concepts that apply across the board. Some writers enjoy developing characters the most, others like creating intricate plots. Some writers work well at night, others in the morning. Some find it helpful to share their work-in-progress as they go, others prefer to keep it close until it's pretty much finished.

One thing that can be said for most writers, though, is that creativity ebbs and flows in seasons.

These seasons don't necessarily correspond to geographic location; it could be winter outside the door and summer inside your creative mind. Just like in real life, these seasons can vary in length and depth. Your creative summer might span six months while your creative autumn and winter span six weeks in total. It might change from cycle to seasonal cycle, too. You could even go through all of the seasons in the course of a month, or a week, or a long weekend!



## What does Autumn look like?

Think like a squirrel: you're gathering "nuts," preparing for the long winter ahead. You want to be as well-stocked as possible, to stave off potential speedbumps, so much of your research, plotting, and organizing gets done now. How much you do is unique to your writing process and your work-in-progress. This is the time to make sure you have everything you need to dive into your project come winter. If you already have a rough draft completed, you might be preparing for an editing journey instead. Gather your nuts accordingly!

### You might pursue quests like ...

- Creating a writing playlist on YouTube or in iTunes
- [Developing a working knowledge of your main characters](#)
- Clearing the decks of as many non-writing responsibilities as possible
- Writing an outline of the major scenes in your novel

### You might battle monsters like ...

The urge to continue researching until you know everything you think you need to know. Vanquish this monster by paring down your list of research questions to what you absolutely must know to write your rough draft, and figure out the rest as you go. (Trust me. I'm speaking from experience here, as someone who felt like she needed to read every book ever written and know every single fact about Victorian England for a work-in-progress ...)

## What does Winter look like?

This is your time for hunkering down in a creative cave with your work-in-progress. You know what you're working on, you have a plan of some sort, and your other creative pursuits have likely fallen by the wayside because you're just so ready for this. There might be blizzards or icy patches along the way; when that happens, take it slow and steady, and refer back to your plan when need be. You're ready to make some serious progress on your project, so honour that. Do what you can to enable your writing sessions as much as humanly possible.

### You might pursue quests like ...

- Reaching a certain word count during each writing session
- Having nightly [word sprints](#) with writing buddies, in-person or reporting in on Twitter
- Making meals in a crockpot for future leftovers

### You might battle monsters like ...

Getting sick. If you feel like you're coming down with a cold because you're loading up on snacks and avoiding exercise like the plague, for fear of scraping even ten minutes away from your writing time, cut that out NOW! Vanquish this monster by building a little bit of time into each day to prepare healthy snacks and do twenty minutes of exercise, whether that's a short walk or a workout on YouTube or some time with your yoga mat.



## What does Spring look like?

Take a deeeeep breath. You've worked so hard this winter, you deserve a scrumptious rest! Rather than jumping straight into something else, give yourself at least a wee bit of time to rest those aching typing fingers and stretch your muscles with some gentle yoga sessions. Give your mind a break, too. This is the perfect time to delve into that book that's been waiting ever so patiently in your to-be-read pile, or to finish knitting the pair of socks that's been languishing in your project bag. Refreshment and renewal are the key words for this creative season.

### You might pursue quests like ...

- Reading, and maybe even finishing, a series you've been saving
- Thirty days of [Yoga With Adriene](#)
- Reconnecting with friends and family who waited patiently for you to emerge from your creative winter

### You might battle monsters like ...

Feeling that you should still be working hard, that resting means you're lazy. Vanquish this monster by looking at how much you accomplished during your creative winter and celebrating your triumph, either by yourself or with others who will understand and celebrate with you.



## What does Summer look like?

A creative summer is about exploration and seeking joy in your creative pursuits. This is when you open your arms to the new ideas that have been clamouring for your attention and allow them all to have their say. This is when you spend day after day doing writing prompts about clowns and writing a haiku for the very first time just because you can. This is when you remember what it was like when you were younger, before your joy of writing was largely overtaken by doubt that your writing can ever be good enough or that you'll ever "make it" as a writer.

### You might pursue quests like ...

- Pulling out the story you abandoned ten years ago and tinkering with the characters
- Going to a museum, picking two random exhibits, and connecting them in a short story
- Brainstorming the story idea you had in a dream the night before
- Writing a letter to a favourite author

### You might battle monsters like ...

The belief that you're not a real writer if you're not always writing one novel and/or editing another. Being a writer, a real writer, has no qualifications other than writing. The only limits are the ones you set for yourself. Vanquish this monster by remembering that there's a season for everything and, by giving yourself this time to expand your creative horizons and dabble as you like, you're helping, not hindering, your creative quest.

## Why does any of this matter?

Acknowledging the creative season you're currently in allows you to give yourself a priceless gift: the ability to do exactly what you want and need to do for your writing in that moment, without a sense of guilt or feeling like you should be doing something other than what you are doing. The time will come for all of it, because this process is cyclical. Take a deep breath and do something today to honour and accept the season you're in!

**Which creative season do you feel you're in?  
Which quests and monsters have you encountered?**

# Your Life is Your Art

Article by  
Vanessa Lougoon

## Author Bio

Vanessa helps people on a mission align with their divine Soul and manifesting blueprint, so that they can power their purpose. She digs into the depths of your Soul's blueprint and gets to the root cause of any issue, so that you can take aligned action and claim ownership of your uniqueness and thrive in whatever you want to experience.

Vanessa is also the author of *The Gift*, a story exploring the question, do we have gifts from previous lifetimes lying dormant ready to be expressed in this lifetime? *The Gift* is the first of a trilogy, with its sequel, *Human Evolution*, in draft and the third installment, *Infinity* (working title), percolating.

[www.vanessalougoon.com](http://www.vanessalougoon.com)  
Intuitive | Transformation Catalyst



## Article

"Make a mess then clean it up" was the wise advice of Michael Leunig, Australian stalwart cartoonist, philosopher and poet. In fact, he was rolling out many nuggets of wisdom as I listened to him speak at the Byron Bay writers festival recently, including, "you may have a plan, but once you look at that blank canvas, you must let go and let it show you what wants to be created."

In fact, I loved his philosophy on life, which is very similar to one of my favourite authors, Tosha Silver, whose book, *Outrageous Openness – Letting the Divine Take the Lead*, invites the idea of letting go of the grasp of the ego and allow the divine to work through you, because the divine is you.

I started living this way a few years back. It was such a radical approach for someone with such an analytical mind, but it seemed to work. In fact, things started hatching in a very unconventional way. I called it synchronicity, because much of it wasn't logical, but many friends and colleagues called it lucky, and I started to doubt myself. I became conflicted because on one hand, even though I was getting desired results, I had that nagging feeling that surely things couldn't flow that gracefully? Maybe I did get lucky, after all, it had happened spasmodically throughout my life and it didn't sustain itself. I was told I was lucky back then as well. But here's the thing about your ego, whether or not you are conscious about your beliefs, it's always going to prove you right, so if you doubt that things can flow that easily, this will be reflected back at you.

For a while, I stopped creating results. I was conflicted. I was trying to do things the "normal" way, whilst knowing it was much more simpler. As a metaphysics geek (and professionally trained energy healer), I delved into my subconscious to clear limiting beliefs and past trauma that was gripping my fear of stepping outside of my comfort zone. However, it wasn't until I studied soul realignment that I truly understood the dynamics of how we are

all uniquely different and that we all have our own "recipe" of how to align with who we are at soul level. It has been the biggest sigh of relief because I finally understood why my intuition had been nagging me for years into a particular career direction that seemed almost too far-fetched to be true, and the process to get there is completely different to the actions I have been taking. And my work has been affirming to my clients because they too thought they were just making stuff up when receive divine nudges in a particular direction.

Trust who you are. Trust what wishes to emerge, no matter what your ego has to say, and trust your process. This is alignment. Your "how's" may be unconventional, but it doesn't mean it doesn't work! When Leunig was asked, "Do you ever mess it up?" his response, "all the time, I draw something and think, that looks stupid, then I sink into a spiral of self-pity, but on the outside, I just look like I'm calmly staring at the page thinking."

Celebrate your uniqueness and don't worry if you make mess. Enjoy your most important art piece...YOU!

# 7 Must-Have Basics for every **VISIONARY**'s Wardrobe

Article by  
Eyenie Schultz

## Author Bio

Eyenie Schultz, the Technicolor Priestess, is a Self-Expression + Style Alchemist based in France who helps creative artists, light-workers, and entrepreneurs to express their ICONIC style from the inside-out, and in every area of their lives. A little bit woo-woo, a little bit rock-n-roll, she's also a certified life coach and reiki master teacher.

To learn more visit the [Technicolor Priestess website](#) or join [The NEON Parlor Facebook group](#).

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## Article

You're a creative, kick-ass VISIONARY – does your closet feel like a match?

Do you feel like you have the classic, "a closet full of nothing to wear" going on? Like, you love lots of pieces you have hanging, and mega dig your shoes and accessories, but when it comes to putting them together, you just have no clue?

Then lady, you may be in need of one simple lil' thing – basics!!! Even the most rebellious, kick-ass and quirky of us need 'em. Once you have a solid foundation of "basics", you can then build on that and add your special wow and magic more easily. If you have certain staple items, it makes getting dressed faster, easier and fun! All while taking out the over-thinking...

Here is a list of 7 truly basic items you either need to buy or upgrade in order to rock the **eff** out of your style easily and effortlessly on a daily basis:

[1]

**2 bras that fit and make the nanas look nice.**  
It just makes clothes fall more nicely and gives you one less thing to think about and fidget with, you dig?



[2]

**4 tank-tops.**  
Black, white, gray, colored, neutrals – whatever!  
They are clean and easy and simple to dress up or down and pair with anything.



[3]

**2 pairs of jeans** (I'm a sucker for skinny high-rise) that fit like they were made for you. No muffin top or having to pull them up all the time because that's just a PITA, am I right?

[4]

**A kick-ass blazer.**

I don't care what your style is, you can make it work for you no matter where you're going! Dress it down with jeans or pair it with a pencil skirt. Boom.



[5]

**A delicious black (p)leather jacket.** The Fonz and Joan Jett. 'Nuff said.



[6]

**A simple dark dress** in navy, black, or brown. Add tights or a belt or some knee-high boots and bring it.



[7]

**A skirt that fits you like a glove.** Pair it with a t-shirt, tank top or button-up and you're out there door lickety split.



Find cuts and sizes that become no-brainers for you and then add your special pizzazz through your jewelry, shoes, amazing hair cut, delicious lip-stick, etc. Watch your closet suddenly transform into a magical wonderland!

Want to push your style to the next level?

Join [Eyenie's Dress Like an ICON challenge](#) to elevate yourself and your style to the **"next. level. shit."** zone!

# The Benefits of Creative Activity

Article by  
**Chloe Chomicki**

**Image above:** Artwork provided by Kerri Whitchurch from her Moranbah Studio.

## Author Bio

I am a James Cook University student studying a Bachelor of Multimedia Journalism in Townsville. When I am not studying or working I love to write, read, and cook. I have a keen interest in video journalism and hope to write a book one day.

- [Twitter](#)
- [Portfolio](#)
- [Facebook](#)

## Article

Sufferers of PTSD and Anxiety across Australia have discovered the benefits that a creative outlet can have on their wellbeing. 'Art Therapy' has become increasingly popular since the rise of adult colouring-in books in 2015. The Enchanted Forest, a colouring-in book for adults illustrated by Johanna Basford, quickly became one of 2015's best selling books across Australia. Regional artist Kerri Whitchurch and Veteran Jeffery Smith swear that by allocating time to a creative outlet you will find a substantial improvement in your mental health and wellbeing.

Moranbah-based artist Kerri Whitchurch is very in touch with her creative side and believes that having a 'creative outlet' whether in drawing, painting, or colouring in, offers her both "relaxation and escape." On 6 week trip to Tibet in 2014 Kerri became obsessed with drawing mandalas. As a result, she has made countless over the past two years.

**What made you so intrigued with mandalas?**  
"The intricacy of it, the detail, and the skill that is required."

**How does drawing both mandalas and other artworks become art therapy to you?**  
"[It's] because it is time consuming and requires your attention to be fully on it."

Jeffery Smith is an retired veteran who served 20 years in the Defence Forces. He has had various postings around Australian including deployments overseas. After his many years in the army and his experience in overseas conflict Jef has been brushed by the black dog known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Jeff resides in Townsville and in 2015 he began to use colouring-in as a creative outlet to improve his mental wellbeing.

**Were you creative as a child at all?**

"Nah, I don't think so."

**What led you to start colouring-in ?**

"Not only does [adult colouring-in] help pass time, I like being creative."

**Why would you say that colouring in is therapeutic to you?**

"When you do suffer from anxiety, it helps to relax your mind. It takes your mind off anxieties and that has got to be therapy."

By the Australian and New Zealand Art Therapy Association's (ANZATA) definition, art therapy is,

*"-a form of psychotherapy utilising creative modalities, including visual art-making, drama, and dance/movement, within a therapeutic relationship to improve and inform physical, mental and emotional well-being." ANZATA also claims on their website that 'untrained art therapy can do damage' and that unless art therapists have completed the minimum of a two-year masters degrees they are considered untrained. Despite this technicality, colouring-in and drawing is undeniably beneficial for ones mental health.*

Hungarian Psychologist Mihaly Cziksentmihalyi discovered the state of mind one finds themselves in when engaged in a creative activity. He calls this state of mind 'flow'. Cziksentmihalyi defines flow in his 1990 book *The Pursuit of Happiness* as "a state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience is so enjoyable that people will continue to do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it."

Although the everyday activity of colouring in cannot be defined as art therapy it clearly can transport us to a happier and healthier state of mind.

**Image below:** Artwork provided by Townsville Veteran Jeffery Smith.



# Najad Abdullahi

## Author Bio

Najad Abdullahi is a freelance war photographer (who occasionally takes pics of her beloved hometown of Melbourne), that has been travelling to conflict zones around the globe for the past six years. Aussie born and of East African heritage, the images of her parent's heritage and the constant conflicts that have plagued African and the Middle East has sparked a fascination of just why people take up arms in the face of major military powers who have invested heavily in combat equipment.

"I've always been fascinated why, average people, from lives riddled with poverty and hardship, most whom I've met have never held a weapon in their lives simply declare 'enough' of what they view as oppression from their governments, and have tried every outlet to make themselves heard, but come to realise the only option is to take up arms. The word terrorism these days is thrown around a lot, but in many developing nations, opposition groups (excluding those with other intentions that do not include liberation but further brutality, like Boko Haram and ISIS), simply want justice. Simply want an end to corruption. Simply want the plunder of the natural resource to stop. Simply want a share of their countries wealth. And they feel the only way to be heard is through the barrel of a gun."

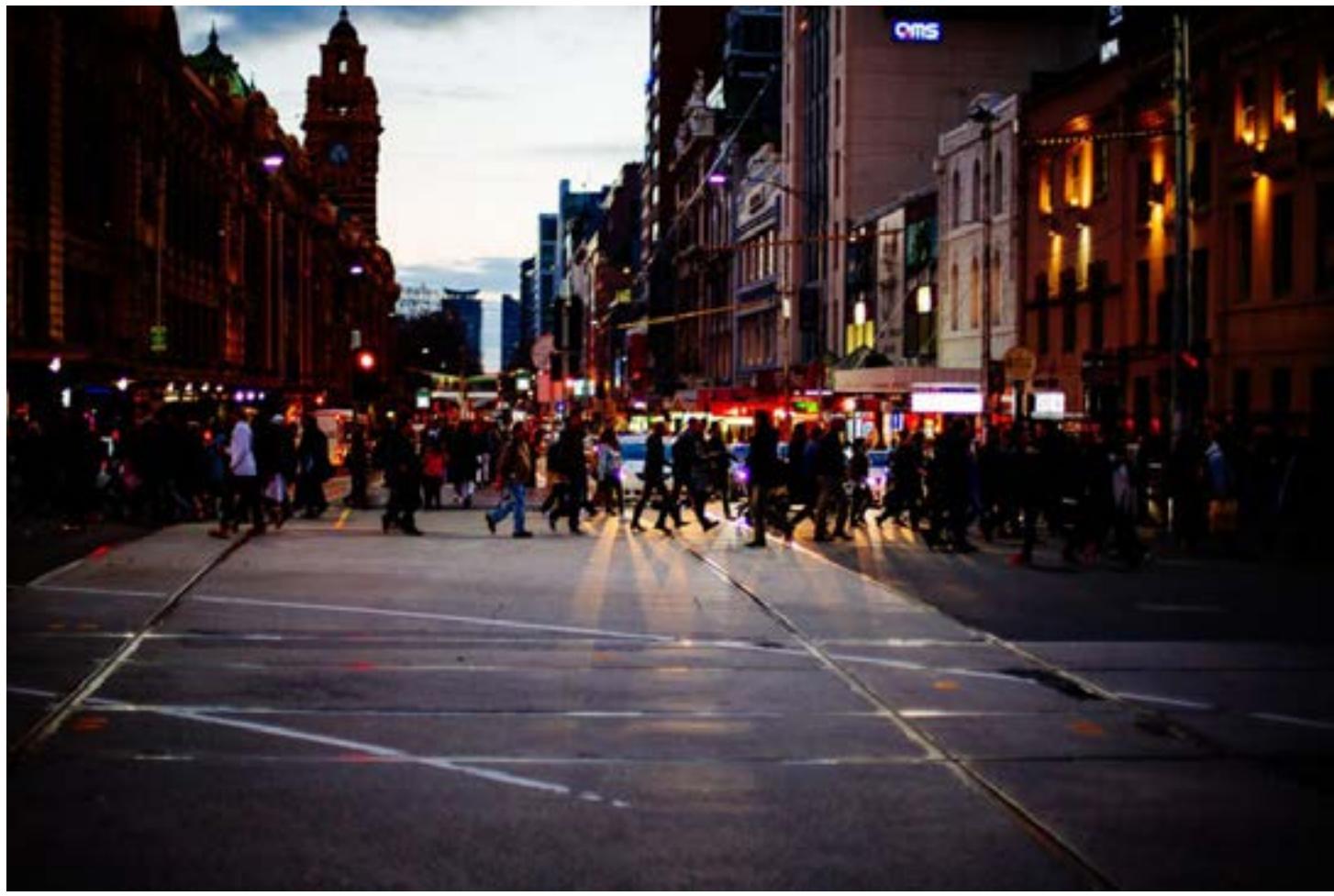
"I have met many men and women who never in their lives thought they would kill another person they deemed as 'the enemy' while in combat. Over the past years I have witnessed the lowest points of human nature and what humans are capable of doing out of sheer desperation. Out of hunger. Out of aiming for

a better life for their children. War is never an answer and nobody wins in war. But for some, they believe there is no other option."

"I think it's extremely important that Australian society pay more attention to what is happening beyond our shores, because the world gets smaller due to technology and social media; there's no excuse not to see and try to change as a human race, from self destruction. War is not a 'problem' going on 'over there'. It's happening to your fellow human beings. I urge all of my Australian brethren to think about this. Cliche as it might sound, but mutual respect, and ultimately LOVE for one another is needed now more than ever."



Here Najad shares pictures of her hometown, Melbourne, along with a few photo outtakes from her recent assignment to Aleppo, Syria, for the New York Times.



ARTIGAS







# Cosmic Matter

Story by  
Jekki Booth

## Author Bio

Jekki is a sci fi and occult writer, obsessed with updating their blog and exploring cultures, esoterica and nature. When not playing with tarot cards and runes, they have managed to finish a Bachelor of Applied media, with a minor in Ancient History while jumping around with journalism and art theory electives. A passionate writer, Jekki is working on their first two novels in between exploring Australia. You can check out their [blog work](#) or follow their [tarot and esoterica](#).



## Story

Sometimes all would be dark. But that was only when they were dreaming. The dreams were dark so their energy could rest. Because when their eyes flicked open they were all fire and gold. Glittering and molten. They flit when awake on solar flares and moon beams. Dancing back and forth on rays of light that are bridges

between celestial satellites for the star fae. All kinds of fae live in the sky. Not like the faeries you hope to find at the bottom of your garden when you're a child, but tiny embodiments of cosmic matter, that sometimes take beauteous non corporeal forms, light bodies when they aren't too busy being light beams or moon flares.

Lithiel was a Cosmic Dust Sprite. Cosmic dust sprites are born from the tails of comets. Tiny and shimmery with little warm dark centres that change colour with their moods and cover their outsides with dancing colours and electric blushes.

Ronir was made one day when a solar flare collided with a moonbeam, as was wont to happen, but not too often. Which was good, as Sky Elves are volatile with combustible moods. Ferrying solar energy around the night sky often made them testy.

Ronir saw her, the tiny one. Lithiel, blushing pinks and purples and swimming with aquas across her etheric body as she rode comet tails past Ronir. Ronir pushed off on a solar beam and collected her. Speeding with Lithiel, scratching and kicking, Ronir tore a piece of the night sky away to conceal them as they fled. They sped and sped and crashed through ozone and sky and forest and came thudding into a wooded womb of earth. Covered in soil and converging with crystals the fae lay dormant.

Eventually shafts of light winked in the darkness. Silver and white, and pink and purple. Lithiel spat out soil, and glared about. Looking for Ronir. Ronir burst out of quartz rock. Long white braids and dreads flicking over a muscled back. Ronir was a they, all in-between, mixed and curious. There was still a patch of darkness that pulsed,

and Lithiel crept over to it, confused as she inspected her corporeal form in a nearby pond, and intrigued by the misplaced night sky. She found she could weave it into things to wear and things to conceal. She made a shadow dress that helped fade her pink and purple swirls. Ronir stood beside her, and Lithiel wove a cloak.

Ronir was pale like quartz with a gold blush at the centre, high pointed ears and sharp canines. Grey eyes with glittering pupils. Lithiel was as opposite as could be. Colours that converged with her moods and thoughts, big glittering black eyes with tiny purple centres and sharp little teeth that were wily and sly.

Ronir was certain there were no other fae on this planet. Were they still fae after their transformation? Sometimes there would be a hunger, and Ronir would hunt. Lithiel was shy, but cranky at being left behind when Ronir left to explore. Lithiel loved the flora of the planet, and Ronir the animals. Ronir found that they could slip into the animal's body and move with it, feel and think through it. One day a rabbit, the next a fox. Experiencing family, sex, hunger and death. Ronir would return to Lithiel after weeks of being alone in the animals, and Lithiel would notice a change. She would tilt her lavender face and look as Ronir would pace and think. Lithiel found things she was good at too. She could collect the flowers and cast them into the breezes and read futures and secrets in their floatings. They told her stories, stories about the planet, and the sky, the big black spaces between the things, and stuff that Ronir thought about. That's how Lithiel knew Ronir thought about her. But neither knew what this meant.

Aside from the animals they met no one else. They supposed there was no one to meet. Ronir didn't care. They had wanted to flee the grasp of the solar orb a long time ago, as aeons seemed never ending, and work repetitive. The Sky Elves were lonely, and solitary as all their conflicting thoughts and needs made them poor company for one another. Cosmic Sprites were used to company, butterflies of the cosmos. Enticing. That's what Ronir thought. Ronir wanted to show her the animals, how Ronir could slip in.

They took Lithiel by the hand as dawn broke one morning. They found a pretty doe, dark and black, and a big white stag. Ronir had practiced at enchanting them through the weeks. Lithiel watched, wary, she was not sure of the animals yet and wasn't sure what Ronir wanted to do. Ronir took Lithiel's hands. Lithiel was surprised. Since taking her, Ronir had not touched her since. Sliding her tiny hands either side of the doe's head, Ronir moved her hands and helped her steady and focused her energy signature, aligning it with the doe. Then when Lithiel's eyes closed, she lay her body down in the moss and covered her with soft leaves. When the doe opened her eyes Ronir knew Lithiel was waiting inside. The stag seemed unsure. Ronir extended energy out towards him, and linked into his mind. He was worried for his lady. Ronir promised to look after her, and he bent to one knee allowing access to his form. The rush, swirling darkness then light as Ronir looked out through his eyes.

Now they were a He. It was a different form, an interesting one. Lithiel stood with hooves ready to dash, and the fun began as doe and stag ran through the forest.

The moon rose sleek and silvery like a harvest sickle and the two deer knelt down into the grass. Lithiel wanted to thank Ronir for the gift but didn't know how to speak the deer language, so lay her head across his back and snuggled in for the night.

The two Deer galloped and played for many moons, seasons passed and the world changed colour. The Fae Deer didn't mind, and when they began to notice they didn't care. They met other deer, who knew they were unique and different and over time Ronir became their King, and Lithiel their Queen. The other deer would bring offerings of flowers and leaves that were sacred to the forest and the deer people. The years passed differently for the Fae Deer and they lived longer than the mortal animals in their clan. But their bodies did begin to weaken. Grey speckled Lithiel's coat, and Ronir's hooves were split from long years of running over the hills and exploring the woods. The other deer noticed that though

the two mated, vigorously and out of season, no birth ever came from their coupling.

The rest of the clan knew there was something magical about them, when the moon was full Ronir their king would glow with the radiance of the cosmic satellite, and Lithiel in pure darkness would appear to have galaxies and stars swim across her flanks and hide. But the deer loved them regardless, and whispered of gods walking amongst them. In return for the hospitality of the clan Ronir taught them speed and agility, how to hide and be unseen amongst the foliage, and Lithiel taught them healing arts and how to read the emotions of the earth.

One evening no moon rose, the dark moon commanded the skies. Ronir and Lithiel felt a slowing of their blood, and remembered that the bodies they inhabited were not their own. Their bond had grown over the span of years. From inquisitiveness, to passion, to love and respect. Now in the twilight of the deer's lives they felt weary but satisfied. On top of a windblown hillock they stood, Lithiel briefly placing her head over Ronir's back. They tilted their heads to the heavens and antlers thrown back they let their light bodies leave that of the deer.

*Darkness.*

*Cold.*

*Then warmth.*

Ronir felt its body stiff and entombed. Entombed in their own flesh. No longer flesh but something else. They extended their mind, and saw with their etheric body.

Their bodies had crystallised, the matter they had melded with upon impact with the earth, that gave them form and physical presence had returned to its natural state while the bodies were dormant. Their cosmic energy had been busy occupying elsewhere, and was no longer animating their matter. It puzzled and interested Ronir, that their essence animated their form.

Ronir looked for Lithiel's energy signature and

felt panic for the first time in many seasons. She was trapped in her rose quartz crystalline form, and her etheric body was fading. The light was diminishing, and her energy depleting.

Ronir fled in etheric form through the forest looking for something to help. Panic seized their mind. Eventually the fear of losing Lithiel and not being by her side won out and Ronir returned. Coming to the clearing where their bodies lay, Ronir sent energy into the earth pulling at the star seed deep within and entwining it with Lithiel's energy. To create her a new form. Ronir called to the earth and the heavens to help save Lithiel.

A wandering Doe, heavy with pregnancy came into the clearing, pulled by the scent of Ronir and Lithiel, her King and Queen. Suddenly the Doe bleated in fright as unexpected labour came upon her. Like a spirit guide Ronir sent Lithiel's form into the doe's child.

Pain and agony and oxygen flooded Lithiel, and then she knew no more.

Ronir was overwhelmed with sadness. In their haste to help Lithiel into a new body, the Doe was lost in bloody childbirth. Ronir gathered the atoms of the moon and the quartz to them and made a corporeal body so that they could hold the tiny new born Lithiel. Ronir wept, tiny inky black tears that stained their face like soot as Lithiel's tiny hands grasped at their silvery locks. She made bleating cries like the tiny new born deer that Ronir remembered from the clan, but she was no deer. Lithiel's life was saved but her memories were gone. Her energy continued on in the tiny form of the faun in Ronir's arms but their lifetimes were no longer entwined. They were no longer lovers or companions.

Lithiel grew up with the deer clan. Their orphan and adopted daughter. Slender furred body, small humanoid fae torso, tiny pink breasts and round cherubic face. Ronir watched over her.

Waiting.

For the day they could be together again.

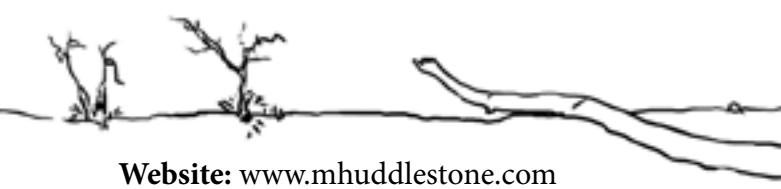


# Arrival of the Ravens

Story by  
Michael Huddlestone

## Author's Bio

I guess would call me a hybrid. A cross between a logical thinker and a creative dreamer; with a dark streak rippling just below the skin. By day I swim neck-deep in an ocean of numbers, data and code; by night, I write. I'm a horror writer who discovered his lost passion for writing. I am a father of two, drawing my inspiration from the world around me and adding my own dark flavour to it. Looking to answer my own constant question of What If. My tastes in literature lie in those stories that send a shiver down your spine and cause you to check under your bed at night. Those tales that keep you on the edge of your seat waiting to see what happens next.



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## Story

Kameko knew what was coming. The tea leaves had foretold it in the days leading to this morning. By noon, the birds had started come. They gathered at each house of the village. It was their frayed feathers that gave away their real purpose. They were the final omen, Kameko packed what little she had and fled the village. They did not listen to her. One had even thrown her to the ground demanding she ceased the talk as she was scaring the children. The children should be afraid; their deaths will rest on the souls of their parents. Her hands were clean. The bicycle became harder to push the deeper she entered the forest. She still needed it once she left the woods to leave the village as far behind her as possible. Something stirred in the woods. Kameko stopped, she knew the sound, the Ravens were coming. She ran leaving the bike in the mud, leaving all she owned in the world behind her. Was she too late? Darkness began to spread through the forest. Tengu was coming.

Her footsteps echoed in the silence of the forest. No animals made a noise. Was there even any left in the woods? The only other sound was the beating of her racing heart that echoed in her ears. The darkness followed behind her, shadows sweeping to the left and right, racing to block her departure from the forest. Outside of the woods, she would be safe, for the moment at least. Not too much further she thought to herself in between her quickening breaths. The shadows that ran beside her began to break off. The fragments grew as they moved beside her, taking human form. These souls were a part of Tengu's Legion, turned evil by his touch. He grew in power from each and every one of the dead he took.

They cannot hurt you. Just keep running. It was her mother's voice now guiding her. As she turned to see the shadows behind her, the figure of the beautiful young woman ran beside her. Kameko knew her, her name had escaped her, but she had seen her before. She was still beautiful even in death. Kameko slowed. Her mother's voice screamed at her to keep going from within her mind. The woman's beauty was spellbinding. Kameko heeded her mothers' call and continued to run, looking ahead again. When she glanced back, she saw that the woman was still with her.

"No!" she heaved out between breaths. The woman's eyes rolled back to reveal all white, her lips widened beyond that of any mortal. Inside the gaping darkness of her mouth, serpent-like fangs appeared, the woman hissed launching herself at Kameko.

"Alone they cannot harm you." Her other's word again echoed as the demonic soul passed through Kameko, disappearing on collision.

Kameko looked ahead, she saw sunlight. The end of the forest was fast approaching. Glancing back the wave of shadows behind her was gaining fast. Her old legs ached with pain, but they did not falter. The black mass behind her bubbled as it passed along the ground. Faces called out for her, and arms reached out begging for her to join them. Closer and closer the sunlight came. More fragmented souls detached themselves from their master, each screaming at her as they tried to make her stumble.

In the sunlight ahead there was a silhouette of a man. His features, while not quite clear to her, held a familiar sense safety.

"Run Kameko, Run!" His recognisable voice called out to her. She knew it was her brother, Shoichi. As if that in itself was enough to make her go on, her weary legs found a new strength and her pace quickened. His features became visible. He was smiling, waving her on towards him. Her heart ached. Only mere metres now stood between her and her brother who stood on the edge of the border of the forest. Before her mind could keep up, her body slowed. Her legs suddenly slowed to a stop, an arm's length from her brother. Her aged body had given up. It was only then that her mind finally realised. Shoichi was five years departed from this world. Only one word escaped her lips as she exhaled.

"Tengu."

"I've been looking for you, Kameko." The man's deep voice boomed through the woods shaking each and every tree to its core. A violent wave of darkness swept over Kameko as the sea of shadows engulfed her. The forest became silent once more.





# Carousels of Charset

Story by  
Kate Grenenger

## Author's Bio

My name is Kate Grenenger and I am a horror writer. I am currently 19 years old with dreams of pursuing a writing career after I finish my degree in Creative media. My passions are TV production (Horror) and writing, in which i currently study. I love all that is paranormal or uncanny as I myself believe I am a little obscure.

[Kate's website](#)



## Story

Smoke bellowed out of the stairwell from beneath the doorway. Balloons popped and children squealed in distant places. Gillian's mind filled with the soft humming of circus themes, mechanical switches and the dipping roller coasters as the screams faded away. Overly long legs dressed in black and white stripe trousers wobbled over through the large crowds, faces bright, lips green and hands waving widely as they threatened to fall from there two metre stilts. Such fools, she thought as she followed her friends through crowds of frustrated couples and nagging children. The carousel bobbing to the soft whistling of circus themes.

"Come on Gill, you promised." She had only just grown conscious to what she had been staring at this whole time, *The House of Mirrors*. Written in thick droopy letters, intended to be that of scratching on the side of a two story tin set house. Unease settled in her guts.

"I said you'd have to pay me to go in there." Gillian miserably snapped. A firm hand formed a vice grip around her wrist as Perticia stood determined, eyes dark and red hair twisted down the sides of her face in a fuzzy mess of tangle-meant.

"You swore you would Gill, Mary witnessed.... Come on don't be such a coward." Gillian rolled her eyes as Mary huffed, smiling sarcastically. "Ok fine. I'll go in." Gillian declared, a sudden wave of bravery hitting her square in the gut. "That's the spirit. Just don't let Charset get you." Perticia joked and walked backwards before disappearing through the smiling faces of excited participants. Charset was nothing to be joked about, an urban legend who lived his life as a circus act. Word of the folk suggest Charset was a carnival clown whilst others spill rumours that he was a gesture who danced in dark magic, trapping himself within his act. Looking up to the cloudy overcast sky, Gillian pushes her way into the line eager to follow her friends and not get left behind.

"Excuse me, excuse me" She repeats, her British accent polite and innocent as she weaves her way to the back of the line watching her friends make for the front. Just plain rude, she thinks to herself before she watches them depart into the fogged mist of the propelling smoke machine. In a matter of seconds she takes the final step of the rusted stairwell, greeted by a tall man in a red and white striped over shirt. His plastic name tag capped with the words "Benny". Face beaming and eyes dark beneath his red cap he smiles down at her.

"Better hurry" An attempted welcome followed by a suspicious chuckle. Her heart now hammering through rough seas of dread and anxiety as she disappears through the fog.

"That's it folks, 20 minutes!" The employee declares as the doors shut to darkness. A heavy clunk as the lock slides in place. A soft buzzing announces itself through the blackness before the room flickers to an array of green fluorescent. Soft pings of lost insects tap against the glass. She heads down the hall, her reflections never-ending as they double inside themselves. A distant scream of a frightened applicant echoes deep causing Gillian to jump. A soft giggle rebounds off walls of glass as she passes through the small archway alit in blue. Beneath her, the soft clicking of her lace-ups as she enters a small room to her left. Her heart refused her eyes to

look up. A soft giggle belonging to that of a group of girls echo down the hallway she had just left. Snapping her head back, she allows herself to look.

"Mary...." She questions.

*Come find me.*

A voice, so convincingly hers as she followed the distant memory that was her friend's passing voice.

"Where are you?" Gillian smiles, relief that she had found one of her separated friends.

*Over here.*

"Mary?" She questions, entering the exit hall into the final room. A metal steam pipe bursts open. She screams, slapping a hand over her own mouth and walking backwards. Her left foot crunches against plastic as she looks down. Gillian crouches, picking the small object up with careful fingers, discovering it to be a small figurine of a red telephone booth. Its windows scratched out and paint faded. A heavy expulsion of air drags her to her feet, fingers clutching the figurine. The ringing in her ears now accustomed to the soft spraying of the busted pipe.

"Behind you." Mary states her appearance as Gillian turns around to see Mary standing against the mirror behind her back. She startles in an attempted scream as Mary smiles, head hung low and eerie.

"Mary you scared the shit out of me." Gillian cusses with a piercing tone as she slaps her friend on the shoulder. Playful and frustrated.

"What the bloody hell do you think you're doing, where's Taylor and Perticia?"

"Waiting for you." Mary looks up, eyes bleeding and skin pale before grabbing Gillian's wrist and hauling her back into the mirror. Gillian screams, desperately trying to dislodge herself. Mary's face disappears through the mirror,

shifting to that of a sad mime. His face shaded white, eyebrows boxed black and drooping with black crosses painted low down his cheeks. The black and white stripes of his overall shirt and red suspenders flicker through the reflection of the glass mirrors before he pulls her in with a finishing act. A frayed piece of masking tape flatters in the breeze with one word written in a black crayon, Charset.

"Next ...1, 2, 3 , 4, 5, 6 ....Better hurry!" The fairground cant's rapid, over-enthusiastic voice fades out as Gillian's feet skid along a stretch of gravel. Struggling to catch herself, she crouches, hands outstretched and now scratched. The circus music gives way to the tweeting of small birds, the darkness of the show set now an open field of blue skies. She stands, breath coming in harsh pants. Around her, a never ending stretch of rusted out abandoned red telephone booths woven into a maze.

"Charset!" Gillian calls out, her cry scatters the birds from their trees as they cross clear, sunny skies. Their wings the only sound echoing in the silence.

Ring, ring....Ring ring

Gillian stops breathing as she follows the sound.

"What do you want!" Gillian's voice mocks off walls of metal as her feet drag her closer.

*Come find me.*

A simple reply that sends a chill to her bones. At the end of the alleyway, she takes a left, ears constantly on alert. She turns left and right. The smell of rust, moss and decay is almost too much. She coughs roughly. The ringing coming closer now, before she takes a sharp turn into a circuit of booths. The ringing stops, the afternoon air now cold. A minute passes, perhaps two, each second she grows more anxious than the last.

Ring, ring....Ring, ring.

Each ring drowns out the silence as Gillian

slowly turns around, feet disturbing the gravel. She stands facing the telephone booth, the phone buzzing on its plunger waiting to be answered. Questions swarmed through her mind — variations of what ifs. With frozen limbs she stands before it, fingers hovering over the handle before gripping the cool metal and pulling down. Gillian steps inside, leaving the door wide open. Her mouth dryer than a thousand suns as she encloses desperate fingers around the device. On its final ring she lifts it off the plunger, its silence immediate. Hands shaking and breaths trembling she puts it to her ear.

"Hello?" Gillian questions, shattered with fear. The door slams shut bouncing on its frame. She lets out a broken squeal.

"Hello..." A plea rather than a question. Humidity fogs the interior of the exposed telephone booth. A hand print comes into existence on the outside of the glass panels, followed by a second in the panel above.

"Thank....you." A male voice drones, broken and exhausted before the line goes dead.

"Hello? ...Hello." Nothing. She drops the phone and backs out of the booth, allowing the door to slam back on its hinges before nearly tumbling down the stairs. Balloons pop and the children squealed as soft circus music whistled a return.

"Gillian!" Mary smiled resting a hand on her trembling friend's shoulder, stopping her from falling. Confusion knocks Gillian's mind as she looks back at the exit, door ajar, telephone booth now gone. Gillian turns at a sudden scream, fading through the mechanical clicks of a descending roller coaster. The crowd begins to part in varying directions. There he stands, under the carnival exit, staring straight at her through crowds of blind faces. The world fades as she watches him blow a kiss, his painted tears now gone as the crowd passes over him. A white dove fluttered up from the ground from where he stood disappearing over the murky grey seas and into the fogged mountainside. She had freed him.

# The Gladiator

Story by  
Lynn Alford

## Author's Bio

I have always loved fairy tales, folk stories and fantasy in general. Now I'm trying my hand at writing stories. I've been sharing the short stories on my web site but there are five novels in various stages of editing. I hope to get the novels published whether traditional publisher, or Inkshares or self-published.

- [Website](#)



## Story

"You are allowed a choice. Death by crucification or fight in the next games against a gladiator," said the priest. "You should have known better than to desecrate the burial grounds of Yesialian."

Hostus sighed. The dead had no need of the pretty trinkets that the living left in their graves. All that gold and silver jewellery just going to waste. "I did not disturb a single bone. So, I did not desecrate the grounds," he argued.

"I care not for your petty distinctions," replied the priest. "The guard found you in the grave, tribute to Yesialian in hand. Choose your fate."

Hostus slumped between the two men standing guard over him, his heavy shackles clanging as he did so. Crucifixion was a certain death, but his chances against a gladiator were only slightly better. Still, every day that he lived was one more day that he might be pardoned. Or recruited to the army. Or perhaps the goddess would appear in a vision and forgive him. "I will fight in the games. When will the next games be held?"

"You are fortunate, the next games in honour of Yesialian are next week." Hostus shuddered at the evil smile of the priest. "The goddess will be pleased, especially if you die well."

Hostus felt a shiver go down his spine. He knew that die well meant that you died without begging for mercy or crying or last minute dodging. Depending on the mood of

the gladiator and the mood of the crowd, the difference was a quick death as your throat was cut or a slow, agonising death with belly slit open.

The priest nodded at the guards, "Take him to the arena and give him to the trainers. The goddess prefers for her sacrifices to put on a show."

The heavy shackles around his ankles made walking slow and difficult for Hostus. The guards laughed as he stumbled just turning around to leave the temple. The guard holding the chain leading to the wrist shackles pulled backward just hard enough to keep him on his feet.

Hostus regretted the decision that led him to the temple burial grounds. He had known that certain graves still held their buried goods as well as the former owners. As a precaution, his excursion to the burial grounds was at the new moon, on a rainy night. He hoped that the patrol would stay somewhere warm and dry. But curse his luck, no, they had to do their duty and make sure the graves were undisturbed. He had been so occupied with opening the grave that he hadn't noticed the patrol, until they had surrounded him.

They had been walking for some minutes, Hostus mainly concentrating on his feet. When he looked up, he realised that they were about to pass through the busy marketplace. "Please, can't we go another way?" asked Hostus. "I'll be seen. I don't want people to know."

"They'll all know soon enough. Get used to it," sneered the guard as he used the chain to pull Hostus forward. "This is the quickest way to the arena."

Hostus bowed his head and resumed watching the road just in front of his feet. He had been in the markets when a prisoner was taken through. He knew what was coming next.

"You'll never last five minutes in the arena," bellowed some man off to the left. The first piece of partially rotten fruit hit him on the shoulder.

The shouting and produce throwing grew more intense as they approached the centre of the markets. Hostus never once raised his head, he didn't want to know if there was someone he knew in the mass of people shouting at him. Only the presence of the guard kept the crowd from more physical displays of violence.

By the time they left the market, Hostus was dripping with the slime from the dozens of pieces of fruit and vegetables that had hit their mark. Hostus tried to brush off the worst of the slime but his reach was limited by the chains.

The guards halted at the entrance to the arena. "Prisoner for the games," said one to an arena guard. He offered the guard the chain holding Hostus.

"Bring him inside, then take the shackles off," said the arena guard. "If it's smart, it will do what it's told. If it's dumb, it's dead."

Hostus sighed with relief as the shackles were removed. His wrists and ankles bore red marks from having them on for the past two days. When he looked around, he understood the previous remark. There were many guards, he'd never get far if he tried to run.

"Third cell, on the right. Only one other customer in that one," said the arena manager.

A guard led Hostus to the cell and then shoved him in. He heard the cell door lock while he was still trying to gain his balance.

"Finally," said a soft voice.

"Excuse me?" replied Hostus. He looked around the cell to see a dark shape pushing itself up from the dank straw on the floor.

"I said, finally. I've been wondering when I'd finally get a partner for the games." Hostus's eyes adjusted to the dim light and he could see that the other man was lean, dark and his once fine clothes nearly ripped from his body. "My name is Lucius."

"I'm Hostus. What do you mean partner? I thought we fought the gladiators individually."

Lucius sat on the straw, his knees drawn up and his chin resting on them. "They decided to try something different this time. We go two against each of the warriors. They have to work a little harder." He shrugged. "I doubt that will make a difference for us."

"Well, if we know how to fight, maybe the two of us have a chance?"

Lucius laughed. "I was a gigolo for a wealthy woman. What she hadn't told me was that her husband was a crusader for Yesalian. When he returned, I found myself here. I am not a fighter and a week is never going to make me one. You? Do you know enough to survive against an armed opponent?"

"Well, I was caught removing items from a grave. The dead aren't really known for putting up a fight. But it can't be hopeless, can it?"

The conversation was interrupted by a large man standing just outside the cell door. "Course it is hopeless. You scum against a gladiator? Best you can hope for is maybe 10 minutes, if they want the crowd to have some excitement. My name is Livy and I am to train you scum. I'm going to open this door. Try to escape and you won't have to worry about gladiators. You'll be dead before you can reach the main gates. Understand?"

Both prisoners nodded.

"Right then, I'll open the door and take you to the arena," said Livy.

"Wait, I thought we would get training first," protested Hostus.

The man opened the door, "Where do you think you get trained, scum? We don't have fancy training rooms for the sacrifices. You learn in the arena. There's may even be a small audience. Men who like to weigh the scum up and then bet how long you'll last against a gladiator. It's rare for anyone to bet over 5 minutes for the likes of you."

Hostus pondered briefly the wisdom of attacking the trainer. The thought lasted only a few seconds. Livy was taller than either Hostus or Lucius and his muscular body was obvious under the leather armour he wore.

"Right, scum, we'll be working over there," said Livy as he pointed toward one part of the arena. "First, you need to choose your weapon. You can have any one from that rack there." Hostus shuffled closer to look over the weapons. There were several swords, some longer and some shorter. There were spears and one trident. All of the weapons showed signs of previous battles; notched blades, blood stains and the grips were dark from sweat.

"Would you recommend a sword or a spear," he finally asked Livy.

Livy shrugged. "Doesn't matter. It looks more impressive if you two pick different things but you'll die no matter what you use."

Hostus looked at Lucius who was shading his eyes against the bright sun. "I guess I'll take a sword."

"Unless you are used to lifting things, choose a light weight one," suggested Livy. "You'll know what I mean soon enough."

Hostus selected a sword and Lucius picked up one of the spears.

Livy nodded once and walked to the area he'd previously indicated would be their practice area. There were several other teams and trainers working in the arena spaced evenly apart around the arena edge.

"So," said Livy. "This session, I want you to get used to your weapons. Then the next couple of sessions will be individual. I'll fight at first using just this," he hefted a cudgel. "While you aren't fighting me, I want you to keep your weapon in hand." He held the cudgel as though it were a spear. "You," he said as he pointed to Lucius. "This is what you are to do."

Livy took two steps forward, thrust the weapon, took two steps back and lowered the cudgel.

"Well?" Livy said with a motion. Lucius began the required movements. "Jab harder," commented Livy. "You will need to poke through armour and that's not easy. You keep going with that."

Livy switched his grip on the cudgel so he could use it like a sword. "Now this is what you are to do," Livy said. While he stepped forward, he moved the cudgel to chest high. As he took the second step, he swung it. Then as he took two steps back, he let the weapon drop to his side. "You go," he told Hostus.

Hostus picked up his chosen sword and started as directed. It only took 5 minutes for him to realise why Livy recommended a light sword. It was surprisingly difficult to keep raising the sword to chest level and swing it with any force. Both he and Lucius were panting hard.

Lucius was the first to put down his weapon. Livy immediately whacked his stomach hard with the cudgel he still held. "You put down that weapon only when I say you can," growled Livy. "Pick it up or do you want some more bruises?"

Lucius bent to pick up the spear, his movements slow with fatigue. He was subjected to another blow, this time across the buttocks. "Faster, scum."

Once Lucius had the weapon in hand again, Livy spoke to both of them. "I want this to be clear. You two are my responsibility for the next week. I'm going to work you hard, so you'll make a half decent show in battle. Anything else I deem needed to make you fight well, I can do. If I have to beat you bloody, I will. If I have to rouse you at dawn and work you until dark, I will. If you do well, I earn rewards."

Hostus wanted to protest but he had been sentenced to death. There were no rewards on offer for the dead. Instead, he asked, "How did you become a trainer? Did you start like us?"

"I entered this arena as one of the gladiators after years of fighting in the army. After 30 successful fights, they allowed me to retire from combat and take up training instead. Now I get to teach scum how to survive a few minutes against a gladiator. Aren't you lucky?"

Hostus and Lucius both nodded. It seemed the wisest course of action.

"Right, so scum, that was enough for a first session. You'll go back to your cell for a rest. I'll be back for you in a few hours. Until the big day, you'll have 3 to 4 training sessions every day. Understand?" They both nodded again.

"Do we keep the weapons?" asked Hostus.

"Do you think we are idiots? Of course you don't keep the weapons. You'll put them back on the racks as we go past. You only have weapons while in the arena," replied Livy. "Let's go."

After returning the weapons, the two prisoners were taken back to the cell. "Hey, can I have some water to wash myself?" asked Hostus. "Things were messy as we went through the markets."

"No," replied Livy. "You'll be washed and dressed before we send you to the goddess. Until then, there's no point. You'll only get filthy from the arena." Livy locked their door and left.

Lucius sat down in the straw. "Goddess but I'm exhausted. That spear gets heavy," said Lucius. "So does the sword. It always looked so easy," replied Hostus. "I wonder how good we can get in a week?"

"We'll never be good enough to live. I just hope that I can stay still for the death stroke. With any luck, they'll knock me senseless and I won't ever know." Lucius dropped on some straw in one corner. "Might as well nap. Nothing better to do here."

Hostus sat on the straw in the other corner. It stank of blood, urine and vomit. If it was a stable for his horse, he would have complained about the conditions. How fast everything had fallen apart.

Lucius was already snoring by the time Hostus had settled into straw. Exhaustion from the workout and stress caught up with Hostus and he fell asleep.

He was woken again by a hard slap on the bicep. "Eat," Livy said as he dropped a tray in front of Hostus. "Next session is after you finish this."

The meal was a hard roll and some over cooked piece of meat. There was also a large cup of water. Stuck in Livy's belt was the cudgel. Hostus eyed the weapon and decided to eat as he had been told. He glanced at Lucius who was tearing into the food.

"Well, did you expect it on a gold platter?" prodded Livy. "Get that in you, we have work to do, scum."

Hostus ate and then drank the water. "More water?" he asked as he held up the empty cup.

"Not now. You might throw up with too much water. More after you train." He pointed toward the door. "Now move. Same weapons, same location. Get going, scum."

"I have a name," protested Hostus.

Livy shook his head. "You had a name. It was forfeit when you were brought here. You'll have a name for the games but until then, you are just the scum." He pulled out the cudgel. "Want to argue with me?"

Hostus shook his head.

"Keep being smart and I may not have to beat you senseless. Now go!"

The two prisoners went back out into the arena, picked up weapons and returned to their training location. "I don't know if you are to be pitted against sword or spear. So I'll drill both of you with both types. So the next few sessions are about deflecting a weapon pointed at you. I'll be using this," he said as he waved the cudgel toward the prisoners, "which will substitute for more serious weapons. I don't want to cause too much damage today." Livy pointed at Hostus, "You continue the practice from before." Then he pointed at Lucius, "Now, let's get started with deflecting spear thrusts."

Hostus tried to concentrate on his steps as before but his attention kept wandering to Livy and Lucius. Livy whirled and hit him on the shoulder. "Never let your attention wander. You'll have enough to worry about without letting distractions bother you."

Hostus nodded briefly, wincing from the pain radiating down his arm. He went back to practicing, turning slightly away from Livy and Lucius so it wasn't as distracting. Soon he heard a heavy thud and Lucius said, "Go ahead, kill me now." He glanced over to see Lucius kneeling with his head bowed panting hard. Livy waited until Lucius was breathing normally. "Good, you held the weapon. Now get up, scum. You practice thrusting while I hit the other scum a few times."

Lucius used the spear to push himself back on his feet. Once he was moving, Livy faced Hostus. "First exercise, you try to stop me from poking you with the cudgel. I'll go slow at first but I'll speed up."

The first time that Hostus tried to hit the stick, Livy laughed. "You need to watch it, scum. Yes, if you hit the weapon hard enough with the sword, you might cut it in two. But it's also a good way to dull your blade, and maybe even lose the sword if it gets caught in the wood. Use the flat of the blade to hit the other weapon. The edge is only for one thing, hitting your opponent."

Hostus nodded and they began again. Only a few minutes passed before Hostus felt like he would drown in his own sweat and he'd never take a deep breath again. Livy moved from side to side, taunting him each time he swung the sword. The harder Hostus tried, the more often he felt another blow from the cudgel. It was only a few more minutes before Hostus dropped to his knees. "I surrender," he cried.

"Then it's time for the two of you to return to your cell. I'll bring you water but I'd suggest that you drink slowly. Otherwise you may spew." Livy motioned for the two prisoners to proceed him. They placed the weapons back on the rack without instructions and walked reluctantly to the cell.

"Good, I like scum who learn," commented Livy. "You'll give a better show." He put a bucket of water in the cell before closing the door. "Rest, we'll do one more session today."

The third session, Livy invited them to attack him together. In spite of that, Livy still had the upper hand and hit both of them a number of times.

"When you attack, you should try and keep the gladiator between the two of you," he said as the two of them nursed their bruises. "When you stand together, I could easily take both of you down by hitting your knees and with luck, it might be a single blow." He lowered the stick. "Not bad for a first day. You are going to hate tomorrow."

"Why?" asked Lucius as he rubbed a bruise.

"Tomorrow, you will wake with every muscle protesting, you'll think you can never move again. You will though. You'll learn to fight through that pain," Livy told them seriously. "For tonight, you will eat, sleep and have a few nightmares."

Hostus was depressed at the thought of another day in the arena. His right arm felt like it might fall off. He felt exhausted beyond measure, far worse than any night spent robbing a tomb had ever made him. He could see a number of bruises forming on his stomach, shoulders and legs from the blows of the cudgel. "You'll be with us tomorrow?" was his only comment.

"This is a small event, each trainer has at most one pair to work with. So, yes, scum, you'll see me tomorrow." He walked away after checking that the cell door was locked.

Both men picked up their cups to dip into the water bucket. "What a way to live until we die," sighed Hostus.

"It's actually better," said Lucius. "Before you came along, I never was allowed to leave this cell. At least there's something to do other than sleep." One corner of his mouth quirked upward in a half smile. "They said that if no one else was brought in, I'd be the last in the arena. Me and the lions who aren't fed for a day or two before. Thank the goddess you came."

Hostus exhaled slowly as he remembered watching prisoners in the arena with the animals. It never took the animals long to pin their prey whether the prisoner had a weapon or not. Dismembering the prisoner though, it sometimes was a while before the screaming stopped.

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This set the tone of their training sessions. Little by little, they improved in handling their weapons and in their ability to block blows. The first lessons were about defence, how to protect against an attack. After that, Livy began to teach them a few fancy attack moves. The sort of thing that looked good from the audience, even if it didn't change the outcome of the battle. By the fifth day, Hostus had admitted to himself that the outcome of the battle was set. He and Lucius had improved quite a bit with the intense training but Livy had no trouble landing a blow on either of them when he wanted to.

The day of the games was sunny and hot. Hostus and Lucius were surprised when Livy arrived for the morning. Instead of the normal armour, he was dressed in a formal set of clothes, the hilt of the sword he carried in a scabbard was finely decorated. "So, today, you will be prepared for the goddess. May you die well in her honour. You," he said as he pointed to Hostus, "are to be known as Death Slasher. You," he said to Lucius, "are Thruster of the Veils."

Livy opened the door to the cell. "Come, there is much to do to prepare you for the games."

The first stop was a long table with plates and napkins. Other prisoners were already sitting there, their trainers standing close behind them. Serving girls carried plates and bowls of food, dishing out the food as the prisoners requested it. "This is your final meal. You may eat what you like, as much as you like. Do not harass the serving girls, I will punish you for that." Livy pointed at two seats. Lucius and Hostus sat and the serving girls offered them food.

Hostus could not remember a better meal. The variety of meats, sauces, fruits and breads was almost overwhelming after a week of basic meals. They were even given wine, watered down but wine nonetheless. He ate slowly, savouring every bite. Hostus realised that he shouldn't eat as much as he'd like. An overfull stomach would not help him in the fight to come.

Livy watched for both of his charges to stop eating. "So, it's time to move to the next part. Follow me," he said.

Neither prisoner knew what was in store. They only knew that they had moved further away from the cells and closer to where the gladiators lived and trained. Livy motioned them through a doorway.

It was a communal bath. Several prisoners were already in the water, again attended by slave girls. "I believe that I told you that you would be washed before being sent to the goddess. Strip and get in. The girls will take care of the rest."

Lucius shrugged and removed the remains of his fancy tunic. Livy pointed at a large box, already a quarter full with discarded garments. "I take it we don't wear these again?"

"You'll have fresh tunics to meet the goddess. Now, get bathed," growled Livy as he indicated the bath once again.

Hostus was pleased to find that the water was pleasantly warm. Each prisoner had two girls bathe him. If it hadn't been for the knowledge of why it was happening, it would have been quite enjoyable.

Once they were cleaned, they put on fresh white tunics and were taken to seats facing the main part of the arena. Unlike the training sessions, the arena was packed with spectators.

"Now," said Livy, "we wait. There's a draw, they call the name of the gladiator and then the names of the opponents. I don't know when you'll be called but once the gates close behind you, all that is left is the fight."

There were more guards there than they'd seen before. The reason became apparent when one of the prisoners tried to run back into the cell area when his name was called. Three guards grabbed him and dragged him through the gates. They dropped him and a weapon, then shut the gate behind him.

He didn't last long. He was still pounding on the gates, begging for someone to open them when the gladiator sliced his tendons. The gladiator pulled him toward the centre of the arena, then sliced his belly open. After that, the gladiator focussed on the second opponent who was willing to fight. It wasn't until that opponent had met his death courageously that the gladiator went back to finish off the dying man.

"The next gladiator will be Agrippina, the Sword of the North. She will face Death Slasher and Thruster of the Veils."

"Die well," said Livy as he handed them their weapons.

Hostus tried to moisten his dry mouth. He wasn't ready to face his death, but there was no choice.

By the time he and Lucius were through the gates, their opponent was standing in the centre of the arena. Death had never looked lovelier. The Sword of the North was a tall woman with short black hair. The tunic under the armour had been dyed a deep red. Sunlight reflected off the armour, glittering as she moved. Any hope that Hostus had that perhaps a female gladiator was less able than a male died as he watched her handle her weapons as she prepared to meet them.

"Goddess Yesalian, I apologise for offending you," prayed Hostus as he walked into the arena. "I ask for your mercy."

As he ended his brief prayer, they reached the centre of the arena. They bowed briefly to the gladiator who returned the bow.

"Goddess Yesalian, forgive these two their trespasses against your will. Accept their sacrifice," intoned the gladiator. The crowd roared their approval. After that, the battle began.

Agrippina was well aware of the power they would have if they managed to get on either side of her. She used blade and shield to keep them from moving apart. The crowd roared its approval each time her blade found its mark. After only a few minutes, Lucius and Hostus were bleeding from a number of minor cuts.

If it hadn't been for the training, they would have already collapsed in the blood stained dirt of the arena. As it was, Hostus knew that he would soon be too tired to block the incoming blows at all.

All three were thrown to their knees when a tremor shook the arena. Hostus felt a pull from behind him and saw Agrippina's eyes go wide in horror. He wanted to scream as the pull grew stronger, moving him backwards. Then the arena vanished.

He came to in a meadow. Hostus sat up wondering where he was and how he could have possibly ended up there. He noticed that both Lucius and Agrippina were nearby and also just waking up.

"Truce?" he said to Agrippina.

"Agreed," she replied. "There's no reason for us to fight here." She paused as she looked around, confused. "Wherever here is. I've never been out of the city before. I haven't even been out of the arena in ten years."

Hostus stared at her in belief. "You don't look that old."

"I was sold to the temple to pay my parent's debts when I was 8," she said with a small sigh. "About a year later of the priests tried to force himself on me. I screamed. He decided to leave me with one of the biggest gladiators for a few days, he expected that I'd be grateful when he returned to 'rescue' me. But the gladiator, Claudius, took a liking to me. He adopted me as his own and started to teach me how to fight. Claudius defended me when that priest returned and protected me from anyone else until I was strong enough and fast enough to protect myself."

"So, you don't remember a different life?"

Agrippina shook her head. "Not really. I became a gladiator a couple of years ago and that's been how I live." She stared around. "I don't know what I can do out of the arena."

"Where do we go?" asked Hostus.

Lucius looked around at their surroundings. "I don't know about you, but I'm not going back to that city. Though I do feel as though I owe the goddess my service."

Agrippina shook her head. "I have spent my entire life in her service. While I am grateful that I am no longer in the arena, I'm not nearly grateful enough to dedicate any more of my life to her."

"That, child, is a disappointment. For this is what I wish of you." The low sultry female voice caused all three in the meadow to gasp. The female form that had suddenly manifested was in full battle armour, not the abbreviated style that Agrippina wore. "I have rescued the three of you for a purpose."

It was Hostus who first found his voice. "Goddess Yesilian. What purpose would that be?"

"I am displeased by that which happens in my name. I am not only the goddess of war and strategy. I am the goddess of peace and wisdom. The games are a mere show, not worthy of me. Too many die falsely, they are not warriors. You two," she said to Lucius and Hostus, "are not warriors. Why did you battle with one?"

"I was given the choice between an immediate painful death or battling in the arena. The arena seemed like a better option, goddess," explained Hostus. He glanced at Yesilian during his speech but never for more than a few moments.

"I see," replied the goddess. "I wish for the games in my name to cease. Enough are sacrificed in time of war to satisfy me. You will undertake this," she said to Agrippina.

"But goddess, the priests gain much money from the games. They will never take my word that you want it to stop," protested Agrippina in a faint voice. She was terrified of saying no to a goddess but saying no to priests would be only slightly easier to do.

The goddess stared at Agrippina. "I see. I will give you three gifts, child." The goddess took one step toward the girl and motioned toward her. Agrippina's outfit became a copy of the goddess's dress, down to the last detail. "The first gift, the clothing of the goddess. It will not tear, nor stain but always look exactly as it should."

"Thank you, goddess," said Agrippina as she stared downward at the fine workmanship used to construct the armour.

"Those that have seen true art of me will know this armour. To prove that you wear it as a favourite of mine, I give you this." The goddess handed Agrippina a small box. "This contains my emblem. It will further prove that you are in my favour."

"And the third gift?"

"Your two companions. Their lives were already sworn to me, I bind them in your service. Until they are released from this, they are your companions, to help you when they are able." The goddess faced the men. "This is agreeable to you, is it not?"

They both bowed to Yesilian. "Yes goddess. We are sworn to you. We will do what you request."

"This will be a difficult task for you but I have faith that you will be able to accomplish it." With that, the goddess vanished.

"I suppose at least I know what to do with my life. I wasn't sure once I had left the arena behind," said Agrippina.

AMIGAS

